

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-11 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-07

PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DOTE-00 FPC-01 FEA-02

INT-08 NIC-01 DRC-01 SWF-02 AGR-20 /143 W

----- 105694

R 052300Z AUG 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2286

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH BY POUCH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MELBOURNE 0924

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CHIEF DETAILS

COORDINATED STRIKE PROGRAM PLANNED FOR

FALL.

1. IN AN INCREDIBLY FRANK TELEVISION INTERVIEW ON AUGUST 4, JACK MUNDEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA (CPA), (AARONS GROUP), WHO HEADED THE NEW SOUTH WALES BUILDERS LABORERS' UNION UNTIL RECENTLY, REFLECTED RESULTS OF A WEEKEND PARTY MEETING WHEN MEMBERS OF PARTY'S INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEE DEVELOPED PLANS FOR COORDINATED INDUSTRIAL ACTION TO TAKE PLACE DURING AUTUMN MONTHS. FOR FIRST TIME COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER PUBLICLY LISTED UNIONS IN WHICH PARTY CLAIMED SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH. FOR EXAMPLE, HE REVEALED THAT PARTY REGARDED MISCELLANEOUS WORKERS' UNION AS ONE WHICH APPARENTLY THEY CAN CONTROL.

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(ALWAYS ASSUMED BY OBSERVERS, BUT THIS WAS FIRST

CONFIRMATION). OTHER UNIONS NAMED BY MUNDEY INCLUDE THE METALWORKERS, PLUMBERS, TRANSPORT, POWER, OIL AND MINING. IN THESE UNIONS MUNDEY SAID THE PARTY HAD SUBSTANTIAL INFLUENCE AT "GRASS-ROOTS LEVEL". WHOLE TENOR OF REMARKS INDICATED PARTY STRENGTH WAS LARGELY AT SHOP STEWARD LEVEL, WITH IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP AMONG UNION LEADERS. SPECIFICALLY NAMED WERE: JOHN HALFPENNY, SECRETARY OF VICTORIAN BRANCH OF AMALGAMATED METALWORKERS UNION (AMU); MERV NIXON, SECRETARY, LABOR COUNCIL, WOLLONGONG, NSW; KEITH WILSON, SECRETARY, LABOR COUNCIL, NEWCASTLE, NSW; AND LAURIE CARMICHAEL, ASSISTANT FEDERAL SECRETARY, AMU, (WHO INCIDENTALLY HAS VISA APPLICATION PENDING FOR VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES).

2. MUNDEY CHARACTERIZED PLAN AS "MAJOR INDUSTRIAL OFFENSIVE" WITH PARTY ATTEMPTING TO BRING ABOUT NATION-WIDE STRIKE ACTION, CHARACTERIZING FRAGMENTED STRIKES BY SMALL GROUPS OF UNIONS OR SMALL GROUPS OF WORKERS, AS BEING LESS THAN SATISFACTORY.

3. SAME TELEVISION PROGRAM CONTAINED IMMEDIATE REACTION FROM GEORGE POLITES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF EMPLOYERS'S FEDERATIONS (ACEF), WHO SAID HE TOOK MUNDEY'S REMARKS CONCERNING POSSIBLE NATIONAL STRIKE SERIOUSLY. POLITES CHARACTERIZED MUNDEY AS "NOTORIOUS DISRUPTIONIST" WHO HAD PHILOSOPHY ABOUT TAKING OVER THE GOVERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA. ALSO REACTING WAS BARRY EGAN, FEDERAL SECRETARY OF THE SHOP DISTRIBUTIVE AND ALLIED EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (SDAEA), USUALLY INCLUDED IN RIGHT-WING OF TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, WHO COMMENDED MUNDEY FOR HIS FRANKNESS WHILE REJECTING HIS AUTHORITY TO SPEAK FOR TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. EGAN TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OCCASION TO RE-STATE A RECENT CALL BY HIM FOR COMPLETE REVIEW OF COMMONWEALTH CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION ACT AND FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS OF EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS UNDER INDEPENDENT CHAIRMAN.

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4. ON LATER TELEVISION PROGRAM, ACTU PRESIDENT BOB

HAWKE REJECTED IDEA THAT MUNDEY SPOKE FOR SIGNIFICANT SECTION OF TRADE UNIONS AND EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT LEADERSHIP OF NAMED UNIONS WOULD ACCEPT LEAD FROM COMMUNIST PARTY. HAWKE WARNED THAT THERE WOULD BE MORE STRIKES, AND PROBABLY NATIONAL STRIKES, BUT THAT IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO ASSUME ALL STRIKES WERE

COMMUNIST INSPIRED. HAWKE WENT ON TO NOTE THAT SOME POLITICAL PARTIES HAD USED THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT FOR THEIR OWN GAINS, SAYING "PARTS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAVE DONE IT, AND THE DLP HAS TRIED IT. ANY RESPONSIBLE TRADE UNION LEADER IN A SITUATION OF 20 PERCENT INFLATION HAS TO MAINTAIN THE PURCHASING POWER OF HIS MEMBERS BY GETTING A SHARE OF THE INCREASED OUTPUT OF GOODS AND SERVICES".

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5. COMMENT: THIS SURPRISING STATEMENT BY MUNDEY IS REGARDED BY LABATT AS COMMUNIST ATTEMPT TO SEIZE INITIATIVE IN BAD ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND TO APPEAR TO BE IN THE LEADERSHIP OF ANY INDUSTRIAL ACTION TAKEN BY UNIONS DURING PERIOD OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN WORKERS, GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT. MUNDEY'S STATEMENT AND REACTIONS TO IT, TAKE PLACE AGAINST BACKGROUND OF MUCH DISRUPTION IN AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL AFFAIRS. PAST WEEKS HAVE SEEN STRIKES AT SHORT NOTICE AND STRIKES OF NO NOTICE AT ALL, AFFECTING

EVERY INDUSTRIAL GROUP IN THE ECONOMY. NORMAL
TRADE UNION REACTION IN AUSTRALIA TO UNFAVORABLE
BALANCE BETWEEN PRICES AND WAGES, HAS BEEN TO STRIKE
FIRST AND NEGOTIATE AFTER. IN INFLATIONARY PERIOD
WHERE EVERY WEEK SHOWS INCREASE IN COST OF LIVING
INDEX, STRIKES HAVE BEEN INEVITABLE. DISCOMFORT
FACTOR FOR PUBLIC AT LARGE HAS BEEN HIGH AS TRANSPORT
STRIKES INTERFERE WITH FOOD DELIVERIES, AND ESSENTIAL
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SERVICES RUN DOWN FOR LACK OF SUPPLIES. GASOLINE,
BEER, MILK, BREAD, ELECTRIC POWER, AND THE ABILITY
TO MOVE FROM A TO B WITHIN AND BETWEEN CITIES HAVE
DISAPPEARED OR ARE DIMINISHING. THIS HAS BEEN BORNE
BY PUBLIC WITH INCREDIBLE FORTITUDE; BUT UNEASE ABOUT
FUTURE IS WIDE-SPREAD AND STARTING TO BE OF CONCERN
TO MORE RESPONSIVE LEADERS, LIKE MOST OF THOSE ON
ACTU EXECUTIVE. AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST TRADE UNION, THE
AUSTRALIAN WORKERS' UNION (AWU), WILL SAY SHORTLY IN
NEXT ISSUE OF "THE WORKER", ITS NATIONAL WEEKLY
NEWSPAPER, THAT UNION INTENDS TO PURSUE ITS JUST
INDUSTRIAL CLAIMS, BUT REJECTS UTTERLY, COMMUNIST
PARTY INTERFERENCE IN TRADE UNION AFFAIRS. AWU
REMEMBERS WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES
WHEN TRADE UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN JAILED OR BANNED.

6. IN LABATT'S OPINION WEEKEND EVENTS UNDERLINE
IMPORTANCE OF WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN CURRENT SHAKEY
ECONOMIC SITUATION. FOR WEEKS, MAJOR PART OF
EVENING TELEVISION NATIONAL COVERAGE HAS BEEN
DEVOTED TO SIMPLE REPORTAGE OF STRIKES THROUGHOUT
THE COUNTRY. THIS IS BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH
SPECIAL CONFERENCE TO REVIEW INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION
AND ARBITRATION PROCEDURES TAKES PLACE, STARTING
THURSDAY, AUGUST 8. EVEN PLANNED JOINT SITTING OF
PARILIAMENT WILL BE DEEPLY INFLUENCED BY FACTS OF
ECONOMIC UNEASE. LABATT PREDICTS THAT ALL ELEMENTS
IN COMMUNIST PARTIES WILL ATTEMPT TO EXPLOIT
LEGITIMATE INDUSTRIAL GRIEVANCES FOR NARROW PARTY
POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. AUSTRALIA MAY VERY WELL BE IN
ONCE AGAIN FOR WIDE-SPREAD FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF TRADE
UNION MOVEMENT.
BRAND

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